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John S. Bushman

Letter to the Noblemen and
Gentlemen of the Counties
of Dumfries, etc... on the
necessity of erecting an asylum

Dumfries, 18³¹



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1831

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LETTER

TO THE

NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN

OF THE

COUNTIES OF DUMFRIES, KIRKCUDBRIGHT, & WIGTOWN,

AND TO THE

CHAIRMAN & GOVERNORS

OF THE

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY ROYAL INFIRMARY,

ON THE NECESSITY OF ERECTING AN ASYLUM FOR THE
ACCOMMODATION OF THE LUNATICS
WITHIN THE DISTRICT.

By JOHN S. BUSHNAN, F.L.S.

SURGEON TO THE DUMFRIES PUBLIC DISPENSARY;

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE PLINIAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF
EDINBURGH; MEMBER OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL, AND ROYAL
PHYSICAL SOCIETIES; CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE
MEDICO-BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, &c. &c.

DUMFRIES:

PUBLISHED BY J. SINCLAIR, HIGH-STREET.

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LETTER, &c.



MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

During the last year, the Governors of the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary appointed a Committee to inspect the accommodation requisite for the Lunatics within the three Counties, and these Gentlemen being deeply impressed with the absolute necessity of an enlarged and well conducted Asylum, directed the following letter to be circulated within the District.

“ DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY INFIRMARY,
1830.

“ Having been appointed by the Governors of the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary a Committee to consider of the additional accommodation requisite for the Lunatics within the three Counties of Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, and Wigtown, and to adopt the necessary measures for calling the public attention to this subject, we beg permission to submit to you the following details:—

“ For many years past, the great need of an extensive and well arranged Asylum for the Lunatics of the three Counties has been deeply felt.

“ At present the only public receptacle for them is the small Asylum attached to our Infirmary, in which not more than twelve lunatics can be lodged with any satisfactory degree of convenience and safety.

“ And we must with regret acknowledge, that from the deficiency of space for airing-grounds, the absence of all means of occupation, the impossibility of applying any judicious system of classification to so small a number of patients, the want of a *resident medical* Superintendent, exclusively charged with the curative treatment of insanity, and from various other defects inherent in so small an Establishment, this Asylum may almost be looked upon as merely a place of custody for dangerous or troublesome lunatics, rather than as a house of cure.

“ Nor is it *perfect*, even as a place of mere confinement, its construction and arrangement being by no means such as to preclude the possibility of escape.

“ But the most obvious defect of our present Asylum is its utter inadequacy of extent, in proportion to the population of the three counties to which it is subservient.—Numerous are the instances in which we have (for want of room) been obliged to refuse admittance to lunatic patients, whose friends have in consequence been most distressingly embarrassed how to dispose of them, and have sometimes been under the painful necessity of placing them for safe custody in the common jail.

“ There can exist no doubt but that in these instances this refusal or postponement of admittance must have the most prejudicial effect on the unhappy patients,—confirming, and rendering incurable, cases, which, if brought at an early stage of the disease under the mild and skilful system of a good Asylum, might have admitted of an easy and immediate cure.

“ From returns recently furnished to us by the Ministers of parishes, we have reason to believe that, including the few patients in our cells, there are at present dispersed throughout the three counties about *one hundred* Lunatics.

“Of this number the larger part are in poor circumstances, and are consequently a heavy burthen, perhaps also a dangerous incumbrance, either to their relatives or to their respective parishes.

“Thus circumstanced, they cannot be supposed to be receiving such systematic and enlightened treatment steadily directed to the restoration of mental health, as they would experience in a well conducted Asylum.

“In fact, we believe the majority of them (in total hopelessness of a cure,) are abandoned to the awful calamity of settled or often recurring insanity for life.

“Humanity shudders at the thought that so great a number of our fellow-men, within our own immediate district, should be doomed to such a fate for want of a sufficient Asylum. Nor is it a slight consideration, even as a matter of public policy, that so many members of society should thus remain a burthen to the community, who, if *early* placed in such an Asylum, might in a short time be restored to the blessings of reason, and to the ability of maintaining themselves and their families.

“Happily the days are gone by when lunacy was despaired of as a malady beyond the reach of medical or moral science.

“Of 746 *recent* cases of insanity admitted into the Glasgow Asylum, from its first establishment to 1st January, 1829, no less than 379, more than one half, were discharged *cured*, within a twelvemonth respectively of their coming into the Asylum (the greater part of them indeed within six months), besides many remaining in progress of convalescence, and a large number discharged relieved. From the last year's Report of that Institution, it appears, that of 59 recent cases admitted within a twelvemonth, 34 were dismissed cured, 12 dismissed relieved, and 6 remained in course of improvement, making in all 52 out of 59 decidedly benefitted by the Institution.

“In all other large and well conducted Asylums the results are alike encouraging.

“ We are aware that the first cost of establishing such an Institution must be large, and *ought indispensably to be large in order to be effectual.*

“ We feel assured, however, that the wealth, intelligence, and benevolence of these counties, if once fairly appealed to, and assisted, perhaps, by the kindred generosity of numerous gentlemen resident in other quarters, but connected with this country, will prove adequate to the exertion.

“ To the Dumfries and Galloway Infirmary it would be an important benefit to be relieved from the present Asylum, not only because that Asylum is a heavy burden on our funds, and curtails the efficiency of the Infirmary, by occupying a large portion of the building, which might otherwise be devoted to the poor labouring under ordinary forms of disease, but in a peculiar degree because the noises issuing from the lunatic cells are a frequent cause of distress and agitation to the invalids within our wards.

“ We flatter ourselves that a bare statement of these facts is all that is requisite to ensure to the public the honour of your assistance and support in furtherance of the establishment of an Asylum proportionate to the population of these counties.

“ And under this impression we presume to hope that you will confer with the other Noblemen and Gentlemen of the three counties, or take such other steps as may seem to you advisable towards carrying this object into effect.

“ We have the honour to remain,

“ Your most obedient servants,

“ ROBERT TAYLOR,	J. STAIG,
ALEX. YOUNG,	JOHN SYMONS,
WM. STOTHERT,	JOHN WALKER.”
R. KIRKPATRICK,	

This was done—but as yet little further has been effected; much indeed has been talked of, and many have declared their intention to support the Institution, yet no one has come forward to take a prominent part in the undertaking, or set an example that seems likely to be followed.

It is with the hope of being able to point out the necessity of the proposed Asylum, that I have taken the liberty of thus intruding myself upon your notice.

My avocations too often lead me to witness the humiliating spectacle of a human being deprived of his reason, “the noblest attribute of man,”—becoming little higher in the scale of life than the beast of the field, and exposed to all the insults unthinking youth and depravity so often cast upon the unfortunate victim—a victim to the illiberality, or indolence of those, who should rather endeavour to provide considerate attention, and to facilitate that early treatment of a malady, which experience has taught us may be so beneficially employed.

To provide an Asylum where these unfortunate beings may find a retreat from the society of their relatives and the observation of the world, is a duty to which we are bound by every principle of religion, and by every dictate of humanity.

Insanity is frequently the result of an hereditary predisposition. This, indeed, has been denied by some writers; but their opinion has unhappily been confuted by the concurrent voices of those who have thought differently, and the irresistible evidence of daily facts.—Mysterious as the subject is, we have perpetual proofs that a peculiarity of mental character is just as propagable as a peculiarity of corporeal: and hence wit, madness, and idiotism, are as distinctly heir-looms of some families as scrophula, consumption, and cancer of others. But melancholy as is this truth, there is every reason for believing, that were the individual removed upon the first indication of the malady from the society

of his family, we should not so often find numerous members of it in the same state. It is a melancholy reflection—but such as is calculated to call forth our best and tenderest sympathies—that insanity is greatly upon the increase. “If we compare,” says Dr Powell, Secretary to the Commissioners for licensing lunatic establishments, “the sums of two distant lustra, the one beginning with 1775, and the other ending with 1809, the proportion of patients returned as having been received into lunatic houses during the latter period, is to that of the former nearly as 129 to 100.” “The facts also,” says he, “which present themselves to the observation of the traveller, in whatever direction he may take through this country, and all the local information which we receive upon the subject, supply us, as I am led to think, with sufficient proof that the increase must actually have been *very considerable*, though we cannot ascertain the exact proportion”—and again, by returns lately made to Parliament, and printed by order of the House of Commons, it appears that the number of pauper lunatics and idiots in England and Wales amount to very nearly ten thousand—of which 5145 are females. By adding to this number the amount of lunatics ascertained to be confined in public or private Asylums, and those in the army and navy, a total of 13,665 is produced—a mass which, according to the calculations of Sir Andrew Halliday, is three times greater than it was 20 years ago. This truly horrible increase appears to be the consequence of the want of receptacles for patients, where they can be received upon the first appearance of the disease, classed according to circumstances, and subjected to proper medical and moral treatment. The reports of the Armagh and Wakefield Asylums furnish a marked confirmation of the benefits resulting from attention to cases of lunacy while the attack is recent. In the former, within the last year, out of thirty-two *old* cases admitted, only *one* recovered. In the Wakefield Asylum, of forty-four cases admitted, in

which the first attack had taken place within the three months, twenty-eight were cured within six months; and of twenty-three cases of twelve months standing, nine were restored within two years after admission.— At the celebrated Asylum at the retreat near York, established by the Society of Friends, it appears, that of seventy cases of not more than three months duration, and the *first* attack, fifty-six were cured and three improved. Of eighty-four cases of not more than twelve months duration, and the first attack, thirty-seven were cured; three *much* improved, and three improved. Of sixty-one of not more than twelve months standing, and *not* the first attack, thirty-three were cured, four much improved, and three improved; and, of one hundred and sixty-four cases of all durations above twelve months, forty-four were cured, three much improved, and sixteen improved; but it were needless to multiply examples of this;—the reports of the Glasgow, the Dundee, the Perth, and almost all other Asylums, teem with the like results: and, indeed, it is now well understood that the probability of a cure is nearly in an inverse ratio to the time in which the patient has laboured under the disease; and that in all cases where the disease has been confirmed by time, fostered by neglect, or aggravated by improper management, the most skilful treatment is generally followed by lamentable disappointment. “The chance of recovery,” says the amiable and accomplished Dr Good, “is considerably greater upon the first, than upon any subsequent attack, and especially if the disease have not exceeded three months’ duration when the patient is put under medical treatment,” and hence it is, that every member of society becomes bound to afford his aid, trifling as it may be, to provide the antidote while it yet can be applied with the greatest chance of success.

It is only of late years that the treatment of Insane persons has been understood; the ancients scarcely knew the disease; there exists no work of Hippocrates on the complaint, and indeed Aretæus, Celsus, Aurelianus and Trallianus are the only ancient writers who name insanity. The Arabian physicians adopted the speculations of their Greek and Roman predecessors, modifying them according to circumstances and their own prejudices.

“Medical writers of more recent dates,” says Dr Davis, “neglected the study of individual disorders of the mind. The unhappy lunatic was permitted to subsist on his bread and water, to lie on his bed of straw, chained to the wall of a dark and solitary cell, a being unworthy of solicitude in his fate, and a victim of our idle and interested maxim, that insanity is an incurable complaint. Of all the disorders to which the human frame is unfortunately subject, it is remarkable that this interesting malady has been most neglected. The treatises which have been professedly written upon it, since the revival of literature in Europe, are all of late publication, and, with a few exceptions, are mere Advertisements of Lunatic Establishments under the superintendance of their respective authors.” In the time of Locke, madness was spoken of as an “ungrateful imputation.” Until very lately, Lunatics were not considered as beings worthy of the public care; they were, and still I fear too often are, permitted to wander about the streets to the terror of the timid, and to the horror of the charitable. Even intelligent practitioners either wholly neglected the victims of insanity, or hastily consigned them, as loathsome or terrific objects, to a “cheerless, dismal dwelling, in the contrivance of which nothing seems to have been considered, but how to enclose the victim of insanity in a cell and to cover his misery from the light of day: and where, in his

lucid moments, he is exposed to circumstances of such horror, that his recovery, when such an event did take place, may be justly regarded as almost miraculous.”—Nothing could be more injudicious than the routine of medical treatment formerly employed in all large Lunatic Establishments in this country and on the Continent. It consisted in a course of bleedings, emetics and purgatives, administered in every case indiscriminately, and often indeed without even the personal inspection of the Medical Officer,—if to these we add the occasional use of the hot and cold bath, we shall nearly have exhausted the whole medical process that, till lately, was had recourse to.

But with all this, it is still satisfactory to know that empiricism and a brutal neglect of patients have given place to a more judicious and discriminate practice, which has been followed by an abundant success.—With the knowledge of this, then, how painful must it be to reflect that the three Counties of Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, and Wigtown, possess no other Asylum for their Lunatics,—calculated, by returns from the parish clergymen, and other sources of information, at nearly 200 individuals, inclusive of idiots,—than the wretched collection of cells adjoining the Dumfries and Galloway Infirmary, and these—still more extraordinary—united to an Infirmary for the reception of patients labouring under every form of bodily disease; an arrangement more palpably absurd in theory, or pernicious in practice, could scarcely be conceived. How it has been permitted to exist during a long series of years in Dumfries, is not easily to be explained or accounted for—more especially when it is well known that the Lunatic Asylum scarcely ever answered the purpose for which it was alone intended, namely—*the cure of the insane*. It is, indeed, a mere prison-house,

and such a one as possesses in an eminent degree those peculiarities noticed by Dr Davis.

The treatment of the Insane, to be beneficial, must be both moral and physical—without the former, the latter will seldom, if ever, avail,—the Dumfries Asylum affords not, and never did afford, moral treatment to its unfortunate inmates. It provides no opportunities for the classification of patients in separate societies according to the stages of their disease, and thus becomes a hot-bed for mischief. The individual in whom temporary distress has caused an aberration of intellect associates with the madman whom time has rendered incurable—the mild and peaceful melancholic is harassed by the ravings of the most furious maniac; the most imperious and the most fearful are companions; the most vociferous and the most cheerful; the most villanous and the most religious; clean and unclean; curable, convalescent and incurable, are put together; all is chaos and confusion; in the same room the furious are chained, and the gloomy walk around them;—no other sounds than the incoherent and horrible yells of their maniacal companions greet their ears—no other view meets their eyes than the bare walls of a madman's den. Who can contemplate such a scene without feelings of horror, or expect that cures can be effected in such a frightful hole? The present Asylum is eminently calculated to produce insanity, or at least to prevent, rather than promote the cure; and here I cannot refrain from briefly instancing two cases—by far too horrible to bear contemplation—that occurred within its walls, and well known, I believe, to many individuals. The first is that of a respectable tradesman—circumstances called forth symptoms of insanity, his relations obtained his committal to the Dumfries Asylum; in it, the horrors by which he was surrounded soon rendered him a furious maniac, and he was pro-

nounced incurable; fortunately, however, he contrived to make his escape, and with his emancipation from this den of misery—over the gate of which may well be written “he who enters here leaves hope behind”—reason returned, and has not since deserted him. The other case is that of a medical student: some charitable individual, pitying the situation into which the wretched youth was plunged, released him from confinement and took him to her home. The result was the same—he was soon convalescent.

Of the pernicious tendency of such a system as is in the present asylum necessarily obliged to be pursued, all medical men are now fully aware; and here I might, did I think it necessary, quote largely from the works of Crichton, Riedlin, Locke, Voison, Georget, Haslam, Pinel, Burrows, Abercrombie, and others, to prove the expediency of a careful classification of the invalids,—and this, not only as regards the various varieties of their disease, but even the respective stations which they previously held in society—their education, circumstances, &c. To a superficial observer—and few men are induced to a deep consideration of this most revolting of all human afflictions from inclination—it may appear immaterial what are the personal accommodations or companions of a lunatic, inasmuch as his faculties seldom construe aright that which passes around him. This error, so dangerous in its operation, arises from an ignorance of the real state of the maniac’s feelings, and of the true nature of the disease with which he is afflicted. In considering this question, it must be recollected that the mind varies as much in the form and degree of its aberrations, as of its healthy functions; there is not a greater difference between the talent of a Cicero, and that of the humblest mechanic, than between the mere monomaniac, and the drivelling idiot. In the former case—and it is by far the most common species of insanity—

the mental functions appear undisturbed, except when exercised on a certain subject ; all else around him, the monomaniac perceives accurately, and judges of correctly ; he is conscious of the state of confinement to which he is subjected ; he appreciates justly the actions of those about him ; kindness soothes, while firmness engenders respect, as well in him, as in the rest of the world ; nay, so quick is his observation, and so accurate his power of discrimination, that he will point out and ridicule the follies and eccentricities of those with whom he is confined ; 'tis true that if spoken to on the subject concerning which his mind has wandered, he advances his erroneous opinions with confidence, and is only astonished that the rest of the world should remain in ignorance on that one point. In many cases this single error may lead him to actions which must prevent him from conducting even the ordinary business of life, and confinement is undoubtedly required for the protection of his person and property ; but, a moment's consideration will convince any one that in a state of mind like this, impressions from surrounding objects, exert as great, nay perhaps, a greater influence, than on the man whose intellect is unimpaired. That it is therefore of importance that these impressions should be properly regulated will scarcely be doubted. In many cases it is desirable to remove every object that might recall the train of thought which has originally disturbed the mind. In others, on the contrary, as when some temporary distress has driven reason from her seat, the mind is most easily soothed by altering as little as may be, the circumstances, such as the accommodation, food, exercise, in short, the comforts, to which the individual may have been accustomed. In a confined space, attention to these important considerations cannot be obtained, and, consequently, a case which may have de-

pendcd only on some temporary cause, or even a simple bodily ailment,—and it is probable that many do at first depend on nothing more,—instead of becoming gradually better as the exciting cause is removed, is day by day aggravated, and the period at which recovery is yet within the reach of well directed art, is lost for ever : and hence the urgent necessity of possessing separate accommodation for lunatics of different natures, and in different stages of disease, and the importance of watching the first dawnings of returning reason, and instantly removing the patient from all associates, by contact with whom his mind might again become bewildered, is rendered more apparent. The following case, mentioned by Pinel, as quoted by Dr Abercrombie in his work upon the Intellectual Powers, is one from which important inferences may be drawn. “A musician confined in the Bicêtre, as one of the first symptoms of returning reason, made some slight allusion to his favourite instrument. It was immediately procured for him ; he occupied himself with music for several hours each day, and his convalescence seemed to be advancing rapidly. But he was, unfortunately, allowed to come frequently into contact with a furious maniac, by meeting him in the gardens. The musician’s mind was unhinged ; his violin was destroyed ; and he relapsed into a state of insanity which was considered as confirmed and hopeless.”

As I have before stated, the principal hope the medical man has of being able to restore his patient’s mind to its original condition, depends in a great measure upon early application being made to him, and the unfortunate individual being placed under his care upon the first appearance of insanity. But here it is that the Dumfries Asylum presents one of its chief imperfections ; seldom, alas, does a vacancy occur in it to afford the means of early treatment—discharges of restored patients from its miserable cells being indeed

few and far between. This observation is not intended as a reflection on the physicians of the establishment—the one is my partner, the other my friend—nor is the keeper of the Asylum to be blamed—far from it; the fault depends entirely—as from what has preceded must be fully evident—upon the very limited extent and the bad arrangement of the institution.

I must here observe that, ample as the resources of the Infirmary are, a sufficiency has not been expended in providing suitable accommodation for the poor lunatic; that he is entitled to the full benefits which might accrue from funds, the accumulated savings from legacies and donations and annual subscriptions, received for the joint purposes of taking care of the insane and all other cases of disease, whether medical or surgical, occurring among the poor, is apparent; and that it is the duty of the Governors of the Infirmary to accomplish these benevolent intentions as far as the means placed at their disposal will allow, no one, I think, can deny. But willing as the Governors are to act as thus behoves them, the question arises, what sum can they spare for the benefit of the Insane, without injuring the other branches of the institution. No doubt, on this subject, there will be a variety of opinion;—the Committee of the Infirmary lately decided that were they by law authorised to advance the money, £1000 ought to be given, or rather applied, in furthering the erection of a New Lunatic Asylum; by converting, however, the landed property belonging to the Infirmary into money, which, if properly applied, would yield a much larger interest, a far more considerable sum might be advanced in aid of the proposed building, and if even the sum to be contributed amounted to £5000, who could doubt that it would be but a fair appropriation of the funds, placed at the disposal of the Governors, for the benefit of the united hospital?

There can be no doubt, as the reports of other institutions fully testify, that an efficient Asylum would soon support itself. The present miserable house in Dumfries has often paid its own expenses, and even now it is certain that the money received for the board of its inmates amounts to within £50 of the annual sum required for its support.

The opinion of Mr Burn, an eminent architect, who has directed much of his attention to the erection and most useful arrangement of Lunatic Asylums, has been taken with regard to the expense and extent of a necessary building. He is of opinion that a house capable of containing at least 150 patients should at once be erected—the expense of which, including £1000 for land, he estimates at £11,000. His experience has convinced him of the folly of building small Institutions under the idea that they can be enlarged if necessary—as the erection of the additional portions generally cost much more than the original expense of the whole would have been. The Dundee and Aberdeen Asylums are examples of this; and here it may be remarked, that the benefits of the Institution should not be alone confined to the poor; neither rank, wealth, or talent are exempted from the influence of Insanity, and although, as the directors of the Dundee Asylum have justly remarked, every requisite accommodation is due to the pauper lunatic, it is expedient that lodgings should be provided for persons of higher rank, not only in accordance with the opinions and prejudices of their friends, but in consideration that it is from their board that the expense of the Institution will be chiefly defrayed. So convinced is Mr Burn that a proper and well conducted Asylum would soon pay its own expenses, and provide a fund equal to its original cost, that he does not hesitate to advise that the requisite money, if not to be raised by other means, should be borrowed

for the purpose, and repaid by degrees as has been the case with other Asylums.

With regard to the plan upon which a Lunatic Asylum should be constructed, much may be said and many opinions will no doubt be adduced.

The subject is one of much difficulty, and calls for the utmost care and attention ; and here I do not think I trespass too much upon your time by abridging the best words of the best authors, particularly the opinions of Dr Spurzheim, regarding it :

Beautiful architecture, fine columns, superb staircases, lofty domes, external decorations, and magnificent committee rooms are assuredly valueless. Ostentation can afford no advantage ; the means for curing patients should alone be attended to.

The situation of the building should be healthy, and removed as much as possible from the noise and turmoil of the town.

The space on which it is erected, should be ample, and surrounded with a wall ; as proper divisions and subdivisions of patients are to be made, necessary buildings must be erected ; large airing grounds, and places for various occupations should be provided. The building should not be high, because it is troublesome to bring the patients from a third or fourth floor, down to the airing grounds, and hence keepers easily find an excuse for their negligence, and patients themselves will often dislike to go down. As the separation of patients is indispensably necessary, the building must be constructed accordingly.

The influence of air and light, upon organic and inorganic bodies is too well known to require any elucidation, and hence the architect must take into consideration these conditions of health, and provide means for regulating them.

The regulation of temperature must be provided for.

We must avoid as much as possible the unpardonable error—though prevailing in all institutions of mankind—of taking one individual as a prototype of all. There are insane people, who can bear cold with great impunity; others are insensible to it, though their health suffers from it; and again others complain of heat, and cold is beneficial to them. The idea of heating the sitting rooms only, is highly erroneous. The interior of the house, gallery, and cells, ought to be warmed by means of flues and heated air. Pinel states, that in cold weather, the greatest danger is to be dreaded for those who lie motionless in bed, and mentions that many patients confined in unwarmed cells, have, at the commencement of winter, been found dead in their beds. Dr Hallaran observes that “insane people during a tedious confinement, if not kept carefully and warmly covered, and made to extend their limbs in bed, will acquire the habit of contracting their limbs together for the sake of warmth,” and Dr Spurzheim assures us, that, in many madhouses he visited, he found patients, who from this cause, were totally unable to extend the lower extremities. A few cells only must be left unheated.

Cleanliness is absolutely necessary to health and to the cure of the patients; but in an hospital for the insane, many circumstances are opposed to it; and thus, every advantage must be taken of drains, inclined floors, and other contrivances to ensure as much as possible this great desideratum.

It is highly necessary that places should be provided where patients may obtain occupation. With respect to the usefulness of employment all practitioners are agreed. It is, indeed, a fact, that in those Asylums for insane, where labour makes a part of the regimen, a greater number of patients recover. Sufficient occupation of the mind is beneficial in two respects, in point

of cure, and economical advantage. Where idleness is permitted, the disease is nourished: the patients indulge in their fancies, and from want of bodily exercise injure their health; they loiter away their time in apathy, while many of the necessary household concerns might be carried on by them, and their labour turned to good account. Many facts might be quoted in support of the truth that the insane more easily recover if body and mind are occupied, had not this letter already greatly exceeded its originally proposed extent; but still, being most anxious to point out the power the public possess of doing good, I am induced to intrude upon you one well marked fact from the work of Dr Hallaran —“ A young man, an entire stranger at Cork, and who was remitted from a distant part of the country, to the Asylum in the usual form, came under my care in a state of acute mania, and continued so without any intermission. The symptoms having at length given way, he was treated as a convalescent patient, and every means tried to encourage him to some light work, merely as a pastime, but all to no purpose. Though the maniacal appearance had totally disappeared, it was still found impossible to excite in him the smallest interest either for himself, or, in any measure, for that which had been proposed for his amendment. This man had nearly been ranked amongst the incurable idiots of the house, when by accident he was discovered in the act of amusing himself with some rude colouring on the walls of his apartment. From the specimen he had then given, he was questioned as to his knowledge of drawing, and having signified some acquaintance with that art, was immediately promised colours of a better description, if he would undertake to use them. This evidently gave immediate cheerfulness to his countenance, and he shortly evinced an impatience for the indulgence proffered him. On his being

furnished with the necessary apparatus for painting, he commenced a systematic combination of colours, and having completed his arrangement, he requested one of the attendants to sit to him. This essay was sufficient to convince me that his recovery was not so remote as I had reason to suppose. The portrait was an exact representation of the person who sat before him; he soon became elated with the approbation he met with; a progressive improvement as to his mental faculties took place, and he was shortly dismissed cured from the Hospital."

: From the preceding considerations then, it results, that a building capable of dispensing good, must be adapted to the particular conditions of the patients, whilst its internal management must be founded on principles sanctioned by experience and universal approbation.

In elucidation of this, I have spoken of the architectural requisites of an Hospital for the insane, and of the internal management, such as classification of patients, regulation of temperature, cleanliness and occupation. The treatment of the intellectual faculties, coercion, diet, &c., with the necessary regulations for master, matron, keepers, and economical concerns, though of great importance and requiring much consideration, it would be premature to enter upon. I wish to call attention to those points essentially necessary to convince the public how incumbent it is upon them to assist by every means, the exertions of those whose anxious endeavour it is to provide suitable accommodation for the unfortunate Lunatics among whom we live.

As some doubts have arisen in the public mind, as to the legal capability of the Governors of the Infirmary, to advance money in aid of the proposed Asylum, I think I cannot better conclude these observations than by laying before you a short sketch of the rise and progress of that Institution.

The Dumfries and Galloway Infirmary was established in 1776, and has been so liberally supported that it now possesses property in lands and money to the amount of £8000, independent of the house and furniture, estimated at about £1500. Besides the ordinary purposes of an Infirmary, providing proper accommodation and medical care for insane persons being from its commencement an essential part of the design, four apartments in the house were fitted up and appropriated for patients of that description. This very limited accommodation was soon found quite inadequate for the purpose contemplated, and, in 1789, an addition was made to the building. This again proving insufficient, another portion was added in 1811, and thus accommodation was provided for twelve patients only.

The management of the united Institution was from the first invested in the hands of contributors of yearly subscriptions of one guinea each and upwards, who, in 1807, were incorporated by Royal charter. This charter as much recognizes the Asylum for the treatment of Lunatics as a part and as fulfilling one of the purposes of the Parent Institution, as any other of the more ordinary uses to which Infirmarys in general are applied; and hence, it seems the Governors of the Infirmary have not power to alienate a single shilling from the funds of the present united Hospital, and that, therefore, if any money is advanced and expended by them in the building of another Asylum, the management of that Asylum must remain with themselves exactly as at present. I am at a loss to see where the management could be better or more advantageously placed.—The Government of the Infirmary is vested in a Committee of twelve Gentlemen meeting weekly, who are again subject to the controul of the general voice of the Governors at their quarterly meetings—and

where then could the affairs of the proposed Asylum be better cared for?

I have thus briefly pointed out the necessity of an Asylum being provided, and endeavoured to shew the means by which this desirable object may be effected, and have again to apologise for thus trespassing upon you ; but having had frequent opportunities of witnessing the benefits that arise to lunatics and their friends, from the views I have now laid before you, and of seeing the results of such treatment and care in many of the principle Institutions, I was much struck upon my first visit to the Dumfries Asylum, with the horrible effects it was calculated to produce ; and as it certainly is the duty of every man to attempt the amelioration of the condition of his fellow men, I trust my presuming to address you upon the subject will need no further apology.

With the greatest respect,

I have the honour to be,

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

JOHN S. BUSHNAN.

*Assembly-Street, Dumfries,
28th August, 1831.*





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